

**IN THE CLAIMS**

1. (currently amended). A method comprising:
- a) providing:
    - i) debit and credit card accounts,
    - ii) at least one higher education account,
    - iii) at least one registered merchant offering rebates ranging from .01% to 30%, and
    - iv) a rebate network manager connected to processors that track debit and credit card purchases to provide debit and credit card transaction information to said at least one registered merchant via a communications link, wherein said at least one registered merchant is registered with said rebate network manager and said debit and credit card accounts are registered with said rebate network manager,
  - b) via said rebate network manager, monitoring sales all of said debit and credit card transaction information from said processors and associated with by said at least one registered merchant via said communications link to said rebate network manager and determining if said sales transactions are consummated using said debit and credit card accounts registered with said rebate network manager,
  - c) calculating a rebate on each purchase made from said at least one registered merchant using said registered debit and credit card accounts, wherein said calculating step is performed by said rebate network manager utilizing a computer processor configured to calculate said rebate based on an existing formula wherein said rebate ranges from .01% to 30% for each transaction, wherein said rebate network manager then debits the account of the merchant, and wherein said computer processor is located at a location other than the location of the merchant; and
  - d) via a computer network, crediting said at least one higher education account with said rebate, wherein said rebate is provided by said at least one registered merchant.
- 2 (canceled).
- 3 (canceled).

4 (previously presented). The method of Claim 1, wherein said at least one higher education account is stored in a computer memory area and said computer processor is connected to said higher education account via a computer network.

5 (previously presented). The method of Claim 1, wherein said crediting step is performed by a computer processor configured to credit said at least one higher education account.

6 (previously presented). The method of Claim 1, wherein said higher education accounts are selected from the group consisting of a student loan payment account, an educational IRA, a college fund savings account, a state 529 plan, and a college charitable contribution account.

7 (previously presented). The method of Claim 1, further comprising step  
e) managing said at least one higher education account.

8 (previously presented). The method of Claim 1, wherein said crediting step further comprises crediting said higher education account with an amount equal to or less than said rebate.

9 (Cancelled).

10 (Cancelled).

11. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein said rebate network manager ~~debits said merchant and~~ credits said higher education account.

12 (Canceled).

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13 (previously presented). The method of Claim 1, wherein said purchases are made on-line.

14 (previously presented). The method of Claim 1, wherein said purchases are made on-site.

15 (currently amended). The method of Claim 1, further comprising providing a tracking entity, wherein said tracking entity compiles all of said debit and credit card transaction information for transactions with registered members for at least one merchant registered with said tracking entity ~~tracks said purchases and said rebates.~~

16 (previously presented). The method of Claim 1, further comprising providing a registration organization, wherein said registration organization receives a portion of said rebate.

17-23. (Cancelled).

24 (currently amended). A system comprising:  
registered debit and credit card accounts;  
a network of registered merchants offering rebates to registered members with said registered debit and credit card accounts;  
a memory device comprising member higher education accounts;  
a rebate network manager connected to said network of registered merchants via processors that track debit and credit card purchases to provide debit and credit card transaction information ~~communications links~~, said rebate network manager having a computer processor configured to monitor sales by all of said debit and credit card transaction information from said processors and associated with said registered merchants ~~via said communications links~~ and determine if said sales are to transactions ~~are with~~ said registered members using said registered debit and credit card accounts, calculate a rebate of from .01% to 30% based on an existing formula for a purchase by said registered member from said registered merchant and to credit said member higher

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education accounts with proceeds from said rebate, wherein said memory device and said computer processor are connected via a computer network, and wherein said computer processor is located at a location other than the location of the merchant ~~and said network of registered merchants are registered with said rebate network manager.~~

25 (previously amended). The system of Claim 24, wherein said higher education accounts are selected from the group consisting of a student loan payment account, an educational IRA, a college fund savings account, a state 529 plan, and a college charitable contribution account.

26-28. (Cancelled).

29 (currently amended). The system of Claim 24, wherein said rebate network manager tracks said purchases by correlating a registered credit or debit card account number with said purchases and said network of registered merchants are registered with said rebate network manager.

30 (currently amended). The system of Claim 24, wherein said purchases are tracked by a tracking entity in communication with a rebate network manager, wherein said tracking entity compiles all of said debit and credit card transaction information for transactions with registered members by said network of registered merchants, wherein said merchants are registered with said tracking entity.

31 (previously presented). The system of Claim 24, wherein said rebate on purchases is provided by an on-line merchant.

32 (previously presented). The system of Claim 24, wherein said rebate on purchases is provided by an on-site merchant.

33-48. Cancelled.

49. (previously amended) A method comprising:
- a) providing:
    - i) debit and credit card accounts,
    - ii) a network of registered merchants offering rebates ranging from .01% to 30%, and
    - iii) a rebate network manager connected to said network of registered merchants via processors that track debit and credit card purchases to provide debit and credit card transaction information ~~communications links to said network of registered merchants~~, wherein said network of registered merchants and said debit and credit card accounts are registered with said rebate network manager,
  - b) via said rebate network manager, monitoring all of said debit and credit card transaction information from said processors and associated with sales by ~~said registered merchants via said communications links to said rebate network manager~~ and determining if said ~~sales~~ transactions are consummated using said debit and credit card accounts registered with said rebate network manager,
  - c) calculating said rebate on said transactions ~~purchases~~ made from said network of registered merchants using said registered debit and credit card accounts, wherein said calculating step is performed by said rebate network manager utilizing a computer processor configured to calculate said rebate, and wherein said computer processor is located at a location other than the location of the merchant; and
  - d) crediting an educational account with said rebate via a computer network;
  - e) transferring funds from said educational account to make payments on education loans and/or debt via a computer network.
50. (currently amended) A processing system for managing rebates associated with registered debit and credit card accounts, comprising:
- a) a computer network;
  - b) a network comprising a plurality of registered merchants offering rebates ranging from .01% to 30%,

- c) a rebate network manager connected to said network of registered merchants via processors that track debit and credit card purchases to provide debit and credit card transaction information ~~communications links to said network of registered merchants~~, wherein said network of registered merchants and said debit and credit card accounts are registered with said rebate network manager,
  - d) a computer processor configured to calculate said rebate amounts on purchases made from said registered merchants, wherein said rebate network manager ~~via said communications links~~ monitors ~~sales~~ all of said debit and credit card transaction information from said processors and associated with data of said registered merchants and determines if sales the transactions are consummated using said registered debit and credit card accounts, and wherein said processor is located at a location other than the location of the merchant; and
  - e) a memory device comprising higher education accounts configured to electronically receive said rebate amounts as a credit via said computer network.
51. (Previously presented) The processing system of Claim 50, further comprising a second computer processor configured to transfer funds from said education accounts to make payments on education loans and/or debt.
52. (Previously presented) The processing system of Claim 50, further comprising a second computer processor configured to make payments selected from the group consisting of tuition, fees, room and board, and expenses incidental to obtaining a higher education.
53. (previously amended) A method comprising:
- a) providing:
    - i) debit and credit card accounts,
    - ii) a network of registered merchants, and
    - iii) a rebate network manager connected to said network of registered merchants via processors that track debit and credit card purchases to provide

~~debit and credit card transaction information~~ communications links to said network of registered merchants, wherein said network of registered merchants and said debit and credit card accounts are registered with said rebate network manager,

- b) calculating a rebate on purchases made from said network of registered merchants using said registered debit and credit card accounts, wherein said rebate network manager connected via said ~~communications links~~ processors to said network of registered merchants electronically monitors all of said debit and credit card transaction information from said processors and associated with sales ~~by~~ said registered merchants and determines if said sales transactions are consummated using said registered debit and credit card accounts and wherein said calculating step is performed by said rebate network manager utilizing a computer processor, and wherein said computer processor is located at a location other than the location of the merchant; and
- c) electronically transferring said rebate amount to a higher education account resident on a computer memory device.

54. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 53 wherein said higher education account is selected from the group consisting of a state 529 plan and an educational IRA account.

55. (Currently amended) A method comprising:

- a) providing:
  - i) registered members having accounts selected from the group consisting of debit card and credit card accounts,
  - ii) a network of registered merchants offering rebates ranging from .01% to 30% to said registered members, and
  - iii) a rebate network manager connected to said network of registered merchants via processors that track debit and credit card purchases to provide debit and credit card transaction information ~~communications links to said network of registered merchants~~, wherein said network of registered merchants

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and said debit or credit card accounts are registered with said rebate network manager,

- b) via said rebate network manager, monitoring ~~sales by all of said debit and credit card transaction information from said processors and associated with said registered merchants via said communications links to said rebate network manager~~ and determining if said ~~sales are to~~ transactions are with a registered member using said registered debit or credit card account registered with said rebate network manager,
- c) calculating said rebate on said transactions ~~purchases~~ made by said registered members from said network of registered merchants using said registered debit or credit card accounts, wherein said calculating step is performed by said rebate network manager utilizing a computer processor configured to calculate said rebate, and wherein said computer processor is located at a location other than the location of the merchant; and
- d) crediting an educational account with said rebate via a computer network; and
- e) transferring funds from said educational account to make payments on existing student loan debt via a computer network or to make payments selected from the group consisting of tuition, fees, room and board, and expenses incidental to obtaining a higher education.

56. Cancelled.